ACCESS

Discover Your Legislature

Series

Legislative Assembly of
British Columbia
Victoria
British Columbia
V8V 1X4

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ACCESS TO THE PEOPLE

CONTACTING YOUR MLA

The Legislative Assembly website is a good resource to help you to contact your MLA. Its MLA section (www.legis.gov.bc.ca/mla/) helps you locate MLAs by name or constituency, provides e-mail addresses and includes pictures and short biographies.

Another way to reach your MLA is by calling his or her constituency or legislative office. You can look up the number in the phone book, or you can make a toll-free call to Enquiry B.C. In addition to helping you contact your MLA, Enquiry B.C. can also assist you in identifying and contacting the government ministry, program and people you may be interested in. To reach Enquiry B.C.:

- in Victoria call: 387-6121
- in Vancouver call: 604-660-2421
- elsewhere in B.C. call: 1-800-663-7867
- outside B.C. call: 604-660-2421
- e-mail address: EnquiryBC@gems3.gov.bc.ca

It also has TDD assistance for the hearing impaired:

- in Vancouver call: 604-775-0303
- elsewhere in B.C. call: 1-800-661-8773

SUBMITTING PUBLIC WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Individuals who head certain provincial or local public bodies can submit Public Written Questions to the office of the Speaker during the legislative session. The questions are directed to a member of the Executive Council (a cabinet minister or the Premier). If ruled in order, the questions are published in the Orders of the Day and may be asked by an MLA during Question Period. For complete information and to download a copy of the form on which such questions must be submitted, please visit the Legislative Assembly website at www.legis.gov.bc.ca/questions/default.htm.

SUBMITTING PETITIONS TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Petitions can only be presented to the Legislative Assembly by an MLA. For a citizen to have a petition presented in the House, it must first be submitted to an MLA, though not necessarily that citizen's own MLA. Petitions are presented and explained briefly to the House by an MLA after Question Period.

The form of a petition is prescribed by the Standing Orders. They cannot contain impertinent or improper matter, they must not be photocopies, and they cannot request public expenditures. They must be brief, must be signed by an MLA and must include the following preamble:

To the Honourable the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, in Legislature Assembled:

The petition of the undersigned, [name of person or group seeking redress] of the [city, town or area] states that: [here state the object of the petition, briefly setting forth the reasons therefor].

Your petitioners respectfully request that the Honourable House [take such action as may be deemed appropriate].

Dated _____ *day of* _____, *20*___ .

(Signatures)

PARTICIPATING IN THE WORK OF SELECT STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Much of the detailed policy work of the Legislative Assembly is carried out by legislative committees. As part of that work, committees often invite members of the public to have direct input into the parliamentary process by providing written submissions and participating in public hearings. Committees also consult with expert witnesses and community, professional, business and academic groups.

A submission is a record of your views or opinions on a matter currently under consideration by a legislative committee. It can take many forms, ranging from a handwritten letter or an e-mail to a typed document or videotape. If possible, it may also be supplemented with an oral presentation at a committee public hearing.

The submission can be a brief statement of opinion or a lengthy report complete with facts and recommendations. Any individual, group or organization that has an interest in an issue that is before a committee is welcome to prepare a submission. Once submitted, a presentation usually becomes a public document.

Further information with respect to legislative committees is also available at www.legis.gov.bc.ca/CMT.

You can also contact the office of the Clerk of Committees at:

Room 224
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4
Canada

Telephone: 250-356-2933
Facsimile: 250-356-8172
Toll-free in B.C.: 1-877-428-8337
E-mail: ClerkComm@leg.bc.ca

THE B.C. LEGISLATIVE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

The Legislative Internship Program offers an opportunity to British Columbia university graduates to supplement their academic training by observing the daily workings of the Legislative Assembly firsthand and providing Members of the Legislative Assembly with additional assistance during the parliamentary session. Ten interns are selected annually and assigned to ministry and caucus, providing them with exposure to public policy-making and legislative processes.

For more information about the B.C. Legislative Internship Program, visit the website at www.legis.gov.bc.ca/BCLIP/BCLIPprogram.htm.

You can also contact the B.C. Legislative Internship Program at:

Room 144
Parliament Buildings
Victoria B.C. V8V 1X4
Canada

Telephone: 250-387-8669
Facsimile: 250-356-5981
E-mail: BCLIP@leg.bc.ca

ACCESS TO THE PLACE

VISITING THE PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

The Parliament Buildings are located at the south end of the Inner Harbour, in downtown Victoria. They are open to the public all year round, even when the House is not sitting. From Monday to Friday you can take part in a guided tour. During the summer, the buildings are also open on weekends, but visitors can only enter as part of a formal tour.

The hours for the buildings are:

Summer (end of May to September) — Seven days a week, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

October through May — Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

ARRANGING TOURS

Tours of the Parliament Buildings are held every weekday all year round. In addition, tours are available on weekends during the summer months.

Organized groups such as school field trips can arrange their own tours by calling the Legislative Tour Coordinator at 250-387-3046. It is recommended that you book a few months in advance.

OBSERVING DEBATES

Whenever the House is sitting, the public may sit in the galleries to watch the proceedings. The entrance to the public galleries is on the third floor of the Parliament Buildings. Security requires that all bags, cameras, cell phones and other possessions be checked before entering.

Entry to the galleries is normally without reservation. However, gallery seats are often full during Question Period, shortly after 2:00 p.m. Monday to Thursday each week the House is in session.

You can also observe the debates of the House from the comfort of your classroom, office or home. Hansard TV broadcasts the proceedings from start to finish, including closed-captioning for the hearing-impaired. Check your local TV listings for the channel and times in your area.

OBSERVING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The meetings of legislative committees are often open to the public. Committees usually meet in the Parliament Buildings in Victoria but occasionally also hold public hearings in towns and cities throughout B.C. as part of a public consultation process. Advertising will appear in community newspapers with the venue and dates of pubic hearings. Committee meeting schedules are available at www.legis.gov.bc.ca/cmt.

THE LEGISLATIVE LIBRARY

The Legislative Library provides impartial and confidential information services to the Members of the Legislative Assembly, their research staff, the officers of the House and legislative support staff. Provided there is no conflict with service to these users, it is also available to provincial government researchers and, in exceptional circumstances, members of the public. The public can view the library's holdings at www.webpac.leg.bc.ca.

The Legislative Library maintains a core collection of materials on political science, parliamentary procedure, law, public administration, economics and Canadian history. It also has an extensive collection of British Columbia government publications and Canadian federal government documents.

During sittings of the Legislative Assembly the library is open only to Members of the Legislative Assembly and legislative staff. The library is open Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. when the House is not in session. Inquiries can be directed to 250-387-6510.

ACCESS TO THE PROCESS

HANSARD

Today every word of House proceedings is recorded, printed and broadcast. In the printed version, available at most local public libraries, repetitions and obvious mistakes are edited out to make it easier reading. The television broadcast version, however, goes live and unedited to the public. Check your local TV listings for the channel and times of Hansard TV.

INTERNET ACCESS

All of the materials produced by the Legislative Assembly are available at its website (www.legis.gov.bc.ca). It provides information on the MLAs and the proceedings of the House. Key features of our Internet site include:

- Hansard — for word-for-word transcripts of all proceedings in the House, Committee of Supply and legislative committees.
- Orders of the Day — for the official agenda of the House, providing a comprehensive overview of the business before the Legislative Assembly.
- Votes and Proceedings — for the record of any matters considered by the House and any decisions taken by the House, including outcomes of votes on legislation, motions introduced, statements and rulings by the Speaker, and other legislative business.
- Legislation — to track bills that are before the House or take a look at statutes and regulations passed since 1992.
- MLA Biographies and Contact Information — to find out who your MLA is, what their background is and how to contact them.
- Committee Information — including committee reports, meeting transcripts and committee meeting schedules.